

# ***FROM PROTEST TO RESISTANCE***

## **A PROPOSAL FOR NORTH AMERICAN DEMO TACTICS**



Because of heavy police repression, protestors wear masks to avoid identification & are prepared to fight back against police attack using batons, slings, stones, and many wear crash helmets for further protection. Ropes along the side of the demo and the linking of arms helps to protect the demo against police attacks. At this demo on Haffenstrasse, in Hamburg, West Germany, trained medical personnel and a sound car are also employed



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## Introduction

The idea behind compiling this pamphlet is to help find a new direction and new tactics for civil insurrection in North America. There has been much controversy surrounding such actions in the Anarchist and anti-authoritarian communities, especially pertaining to the "Day of Action" which has followed the four Continental Anarchist Conferences. This is not intended to fuel this controversy, instead, how we can constructively turn these and other spontaneous demonstrations into a viable and effective means of expressing ourselves. It is all too obvious that the Anarchist and anti-authoritarian community lacks practical experience in such areas and it is similarly obvious that a change from the current tactics, which date back to the 1960's, are no longer effective. For all those who still cling to the belief that healing circles and sit ins are the way to effect change, then you are hopelessly lost. Yes, these actions do bring needed attention to a cause, but the powerful elite and their hired henchmen (the government) has developed far more brutal and effective means to make these actions ineffective alone.

## A European Example

For the sake of practical and time-tested experience, in this pamphlet we look to the West German anti-authoritarian community. The West German government is one of the most oppressive states in western Europe and at the same time boasts one of the largest and most organized anti-authoritarian communities. Most people in the movement would describe themselves as "autonomes", meaning they are free individuals, autonomous of any particular party or dogma. Most cities have a sizeable and very effective autonome communities, while often having their own cultural & political centers. There they can organize, meet people, party and try to develop a free, non-sexist, non-racist anarchist community. In Hamburg there is a community center which has become integrated into an entire squatted city block called Haffenstrasse. Many of these centers have set up nightly or weekly "people's kitchens" where people can eat even if they have no money. The autonome community places a significant emphasis on solidarity, especially towards workers, students and liberation struggles around the world (which the North American anti-authoritarian community greatly lacks).

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## The "Black Bloc"

This is a tactic commonly used by the autonomes as an effective way of adding militancy while encouraging self defense and equal participation at protest marches. The black block or "revolutionary block" is most commonly identified by the fact virtually all the participants dress entirely in black clothing and keep in close formation with each other. This is an attempt to identify as a group while at the same time being able to defend themselves from police attack. At almost all demonstration marches, there is a revolutionary block, often at the lead or tail end of the protest. "...At the front of the demo in pink(wimmin for a just world), next comes green block (stop the destruction of rain forests), then the red block (exploitation or socialism), then finally the black block (against everything of course)..."

For the sake of protection against attack, the participants in the black block commonly keep in a close group and often link arms to prevent penetration of the group by police. Often times, the people on the outer edge of the group will also hold ropes. Furthermore, most of the participants wear hoods or balaclavas to prevent identification by the police and many will also wear crash helmets. Batons, slings, stones, etc. have also been effectively employed to repel police attacks.

It is also a common and effective tactic to do selective property damage as the protest march passes by obviously relate targets along the route. For instance, as the group passes a bank during an anti-IMF demo, several black bloc participants may break from the group and trash the bank, while quickly returning to the protection of the group as a whole. This is an effective use of numbers and a great way to direct anger at specific targets.

To further protect against police repression, already in use practices of demonstration participation will make this more effective. The "un-arrest" is an effective way to physical remove those arrested from police custody - maybe in the form of pulling someone out of the cops hands or even freeing them from police vehicles. Affinity groups are also very effective. This means going to the demo with a specific group of people with the intention of looking out for each other and sticking together. This insures no lone stragglers who are easily picked off by police. Furthermore, by dressing all in similar clothing, undercover police will be less likely to infiltrate the group - as to not be mistaken for protestors if the cops do decide to attack the demo!

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## Conclusion

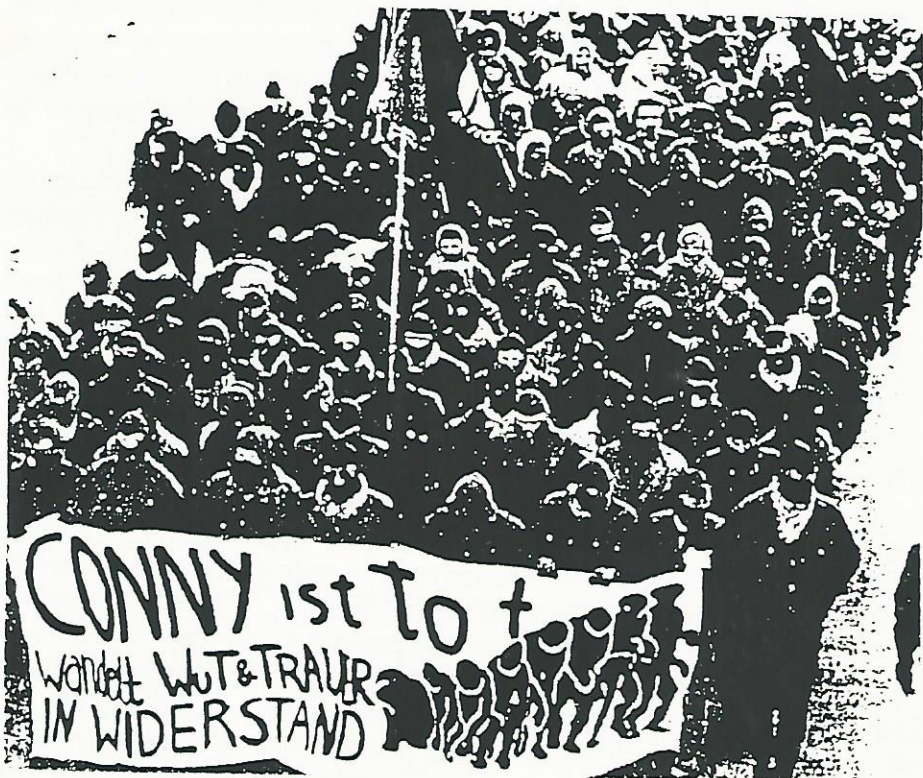
As a conclusion of this pamphlet, we have included an interview with a West Berlin Autonomist to further detail the background behind the kind of actions we are calling for. Please note however that this pamphlet is just a suggestion for actions in North America. We realize that the actions described here are not a means to and end by themselves. We must creatively work together to build a strong and determined movement of resistance on many fronts. And remember, it is love and freedom that propels us to our dreams!

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Written by a Minneapolis Anarchist group. Please copy and distribute around North America. Feel free to add anything we have forgotten or overlooked. We would like to see further discussions on this topic in magazines and journals, as well as community discussion groups. ★

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"Fire and Flames" from Endless Struggle 'zine.



A protest march on 11 / 24 / 89 in Gottingen, West Germany demonstrating against the murder of an anti-fascist woman by the police.

# FIRE AND FLAMES

## Interview with a W. Berlin Autonomist

So maybe you could begin by telling us how it is living in West Berlin and how it differs from other West German cities? It's not that different than living in big cities like Hamburg, Frankfurt... There might be some differences, for instance W. Berlin is like an island, surrounded by a wall, and so people live really crowded in a city of 2 million. And especially in the wintertime it's getting really depressive. I'm living in Kreuzberg, and it's one of the poorest neighbourhoods, and you could compare this area with say the lower East Side of New York, with large apartment buildings, many people living crowded together, not much green, and many people are really frustrated. Another thing about West Berlin, located in East Germany, is you must drive three or four hours to West Germany and may stay in West Berlin because maybe they don't have the money to drive out, so especially many poor people have no choice and must stay in West Berlin. And I have stayed two to three years in West Berlin without leaving for a week, etc., so it's a kind of prison in a way. You're surrounded by a wall and to leave the city the atmosphere is different than say Vancouver because you have to cross a border, to show your ID, have money, etc. Also, West Berlin isn't really a part of West Germany: West Germany has 11 federal states including W. Berlin, but W. Berlin doesn't have the right to send politicians to the federal government to make decisions. It's a similar system to the U.S.: from each state they send a senator to the congress. West Berlin doesn't have his right. And it's also a military zone. We have 30000 soldiers, Americans, British, French, all divided into their respective sectors. And sometimes it's really fucked up. In your neighbourhood, you see them driving down the street standing in their jeep with a machine gun and pointing at you. They don't shoot, but they play all kinds of head games.

It's like an occupied city then? Yeah, you don't feel like it's your city or anything. It's a result of the second world war. The





americans have total power, they can overturn the W. Berlin gov't. & the police. When Ron Reagan came to W. Berlin in 1982 & around 10,000 people were fighting back the kops in the street, the US administration was considering sending the military into the streets, & america has a right to do it, it's a constitutional right.

**What are the origins of the autonomous movement? What are the struggles you're fighting for?** Uh, the origins of the autonomous movement are found in the beginning of the '80s, they have their background in all sorts of social movements, like squatting, struggles against the NATO runway in Frankfurt, against nuclear power, environmental destruction. The major goals of the movement, I would say, are struggling for self-determination, for a society without power, against capitalism, against imperialism, fighting against states, & a really important part of the movement is fighting against the patriarchy & sexist society. The autonomous movement isn't like an organisation. It's many independent groups joining in, & of course they have different experiences, they work on different projects, but the major things that unite autonomous groups together are the points of anti-statist, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-patriarchy, & fighting for a totally self-determined society. It is also very international, supporting the liberation struggles in the 3 continents, the people in Azania (S. Africa), in Palestine, in El Salvador. And of course the movement is very critical of so-called "socialist" states such as Cuba, and when they support liberation struggles they support the peoples struggle not just the party.

**How does the movement show this solidarity, how do they support these struggles?** How do they see this as a part of their day to day lives? One way for example is going in the streets & demonstrating. The last demo I went to before coming to Canada was in Hamburg. Autonomous & anti-imperialist groups called a demo in support of the Palestinians, the Intifada, & around 3,000 people participated. We went down the streets in Hamburg & there were Palestinian solidarity groups, people from the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who made a speech, one person from the autonomous movement made a speech as to why it was important to link the nation-wide struggle in W. Germany with the international struggle, because the world economic system is organised internationally & it's exploiting people all over the world, so of course it's really important that we as a movement, it doesn't matter if you live in Canada or W. Germany, organise the struggle also internationally & be in solidarity with the struggle all over the world; in China, Palestine, Azania,

basically the people who are fighting for their right to survive, to live without hunger... & how we show it is going to demos, leaflets, magazines, putting out info. And of course there is the struggle by militant groups, guerrilla groups, like for example the Revolutionary Cells who are attacking S. African businesses, businesses in S. Africa or Israel, for example Daimler-Benz supplies the Israeli army with vans & the S. African police with vans, cars. So there is a widespread resistance in demos, benefit shows, militant direct actions... and anytime a scumbag from one of these countries is coming we organise big demos...

**What are some ways people are living outside of the capitalist system... are people doing that?** It's not entirely possible to live outside of the capitalist system because you live in it, and there isn't any real free space where you can live totally independent, because society affects you all the time. But of course we do try and fight for free spaces; for example squatting, which gives you a certain kind of free space because you don't respect paying rent to housing companies or landlords. And this is a way we try to show a different way of living, & squatting to me is a kind of anti-capitalist struggle because you refuse to pay rent, you don't accept the idea of "property". It's also a de-controlled area we live differently. We don't live isolated, we live together. Like 50-60 people live together, & it's really important for communication, exchanging info, within the movement.

**And I suppose by squatting it means not being isolated as much as in a workplace...**

For sure. And that's all about what we're fighting for. In Kreuzberg people work and pay like 50 - 60 % of their wage for rent. You work 40 hours a week and 50% of your wage goes to rent. That's totally unjustified, totally against people. Right now there is a campaign in W. Berlin to organise a rent-boycott also, and now there are 8 big squatted houses in W. Berlin, also in Hamburg in the Hafanstraase. And as I said it's really important for communication, because like in Vancouver you have say 10 different houses, and so the exchange of information isn't that great. You don't have daily discussions, which is important for organisation.

**So what kind of repression does the autonomous movement face?** I think every movement faces oppression by the gov't, because if these movements are revolutionary movements, the people who control the country, the gov't, the corporations, businesses, they want to protect their capitalist, imperialist and patriarchal society, of course! They try to dam up the revolutionary struggle. Many people are arrested, sent to jail, and we must look at how we can organise resistance without getting caught up in this oppressive machine. But everyone who is part of the rev



lutionary autonomous movement, they know that the people who rule the country don't wanna give up just like that, not voluntarily. For example, this year there was a hunger strike by 48 political prisoners from the RAF, autonomous and anti-imperialist groups, to fight against the practise of isolation in prison. They demanded association, free medical care, open political debate, so we as an autonomous movement organised a big wide-spread campaign to back up the demands; we had big, fucking huge demos, in Hamburg with 8,000, 10,000 in Bonn, many small independent anti-imperialist groups attacked multi-national corporations with incendiary bombs, we had all kinds of struggles to back up the demands. And it's important to show that the autonomous movement doesn't forget the prisoners, and they are a part of our movement.

Another major position of the autonomous movement is that it is not pacifist, the movement is not only supporting militant, direct actions - the armed struggle - they also practice it. The autonomous movement sees revolutionary violence against an oppressive society as a part of the resistance. This is seen in attacks on property, militant demos, smashing windows of sex shops, riots; this is all part of the resistance. It's not that important how you are fighting back, violent or non-violent, it's what you are fighting for.

**What are some ways the autonomous movement fights against patriarchy?** Uh, one militant group; the Roten Zora (Red Zora) is a militant feminist group, and they are a really effective guerilla group. They did the action against Adler, a big multi-national corporation who produce clothing. And this corporation has some factories in South Korea, & here wimmin are working for maybe 20 cents an hour, & these wimmin face sexual harrasment, exploitation, & they demanded, in a strike, better work conditions, higher wage, end sexual harrasment. Adler didn't give a fuck about this, so Red Zora attacked Adler with incendiary bombs in 10 different places in West Germany, causing approximately \$10 million damage, backing up the wimmins demands in South Korea. And they were saying; when you don't do as the wimmin workers demand, we're going to fucking blow you away. So Adler was forced to do as the workers demanded. This is a good example of militant actions having a positive effect, and can support the struggle of wimmin in the periphery countries, against sexism, against multi-national corporations. It raised consciousness, & Red Zora released statements on the actions which were re-printed in many magazines, so people knew what this corporation was doing & why it was attacked.

We also have many anti-imperialist people who are part of the revolutionary movement

who are not quite autonomous in the way that they are organised. They're quite influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideas, but most of them are pretty much unorthodox communists; they aren't into partys, but they're not like the autonomous movement, and they don't have as much criticism of state-socialist countries, & they're also supporting more Marxist-Leninist urban guerrilla groups like the RAF. The autonomous movement supports their politics in a way, but are really critical to their statements & politics.

I think the autonomous movement has an effect on the society because many, many people are getting pissed off, frustrated, & they'll realize that they're exploited too, by the state. So of course they're sympathizing with the autonomous movement in a way, they're saying we should connect more with these people because maybe they're fighting for something I'm fighting for too...

**And maybe that's the real hope for change.** That's the real hope for change of course. 10,000 or 50,000 people can't really change a society, of course we need more people. We aren't stupid. We know we can only win when we are more, when we're the majority of the people. So we have many papers, magazines, radio, demos, many things where we try to educate people, to make contact with other groups in society who are not necessarily autonomous people. For example in Wackersdorf, where the government is building up a nuclear re-processing plant in Bavaria, and many people are living in this area who are very conservative in their way of thinking, living, voting etc., but theyn these people realized that they didn't want this nuclear plant in their area and they started protesting and fighting back. Also many autonomous people were fighting back against this plant, and so conservative people and autonomous people were working together. Many people made good contacts and good friends... and many of these people have changed, realizing that the gov't doesn't really give a shit about them. And I was down there, at the fences which they built around the construction area, and over half the people at the protests were from the area. Many very old people, all these people were no longer in illusion... they saw the police brutality. I was really amazed how they've changed their way of thinking after they saw the police violence. And we were down there trying to break through the fence, which wasn't totally possible with about 20,000 kops inside, & they were throwing tear-gas etc., and an old man came up with us and he said: "This is really great, what you are doing. You know, I'm really too old to do this, I'm really not able to break the fence with a bolt-cutter or to saw it, but you know what? I would use dynamite!" It



was one of most positive experiences I've had with people who have different ways to thinking and living. And I saw the possibility that if we fight with these people we're going to be a bigger movement, it gave me a lot of optimism & hope, that it's possible to build a movement capable of stopping the people who rule the society. And it's not just that I'm fighting against something, I'm also fighting for something, to express my love & my feelings, to explore - something I can't do in this society. I'm caught.

Thanks a lot for talking. Okay, and I hope the struggle continues in Canada as in West Germany, and one day we're gonna make it. Ciao!



May Day 1989 in West Berlin's Kreuzberg district. Rioting broke out and many stores were looted, with autonomists, Turkish kids and many other people participating. Food was distributed throughout the community and over 200 cops were injured in street fighting.

*Everything that can be used to resist the culture of fear is a sign of our living culture*